

Terrorism Preparedness

For More Information

County of San Diego
General County Home Page
www.sdcounty.ca.gov

State of California
Office of Emergency Services
www.oes.ca.gov

Preparing for Emergencies:
County of San Diego
Office of Emergency Services
(858) 565-3490
www.sdcounty.ca.gov/odp

Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
(888) 246-2675
www.cdc.gov

Vaccine Information Hotline
(800) 600-9594

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security
www.ready.gov

Crisis Intervention Line
(800) 550-5234

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org

County of San Diego Board of Supervisors
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Public Health Services

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BIOTERRORISM

A public health guide
for residents of
San Diego County

Terrorism & Bioterrorism

What Is Terrorism?

Terrorism is defined as the illegal use of threats or violence to bring fear to people for the purpose of demanding and or gaining public attention for political, religious or social reasons.



What Is Bioterrorism?

Bioterrorism is a variety of terrorism that relies upon the intentional or threatened use of viruses, bacteria, fungi, or toxins from living organisms to cause death or disease in humans, animals, or plants.



Are We Prepared?

The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency and emergency response teams are well prepared to respond to threats of bioterrorism. Advanced communication networks have been established to promote efficient and rapid contact among federal, state, and local governments as well as with emergency response teams and health care providers.



Emergency Supply Kit

Kee an emergency supply kit stocked so that each member of your family or household can survive without assistance for at least three days.

Basic kits should include:

- Packaged food that does not require cooking, and that can be stored for a long time
- Bottled water
- First aid kit and manual
- Battery-powered radio, flashlights with batteries
- Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of doctors and pharmacists
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Whistle
- Large plastic bags for trash, waste, water protection
- Cash, credit cards and copies of ID documents in a waterproof container
- Blankets or sleeping bags

Additional items to consider:

- Fire extinguisher (A-B-C type)
- Infant and feminine hygiene supplies
- Essential medicines and eyeglasses
- Food and water for pets
- Duct tape
- Extra set of keys
- Manual can opener
- Extra clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes
- Candles or glowsticks/lightsticks if flashlight fails
- Matches or lighters
- Charcoal or camp stove for outdoor cooking*

Consider making a smaller kit to keep in the trunk of each car, in case a disaster occurs while you are away from home.

* Never use a charcoal grill indoors, even in a fireplace, as it can result in fatal carbon monoxide poisoning.



Q: Should I buy a gas mask?

A: The National Centers for Disease Control recommends NOT buying a gas mask.

Quality of retail masks is uncertain, and masks that do not fit well or are not used properly will not give adequate protection.

Additionally, unless you wear the gas mask EVERYWHERE you go, it would not be effective in the event of an attack.

Q: How will I know if a bioterrorism attack has occurred? Who will tell me?

A: If an attack occurs locally, public health officials will work to isolate and treat any contagions, in order to prevent the spread of infection.

Part of the prevention effort will include informing the public about the steps they should take to protect themselves and their families.

You will probably learn of any danger by radio, TV broadcasts, a telephone call, or emergency response workers may come to your door. Should this occur, follow the instructions of local officials, and try to remain calm. Public health staff are well trained and have plans in place to deal with possible outbreaks of this nature.

Q: Where can I get more detailed information about bioterrorism preparedness?

A: For information on what the County of San Diego is doing about regional terrorism preparedness, and for links to other sources of information about terrorism and bioterrorism, you can visit the County's Web site: www.sdcounty.ca.gov/terrorism

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has information about terrorism preparedness in general at their Web site: www.ready.gov

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has extensive information about bioterrorism related agents and illnesses at their Web site: www.cdc.gov

What Should I Do?

1. PLAN

- ▶ Develop a FAMILY DISASTER PLAN, just as you would for any emergency, such as a fire or earthquake.
- ▶ Design an ESCAPE/EVACUATION PLAN for work and home. Have multiple escape routes, and a common meeting place.
- ▶ Have an EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN posted and readily available. Include numbers for:
 - Family doctors (physicians AND veterinarians).
 - An out-of-area contact through whom you can relay information during a disaster.


2. PREPARE

- ▶ Assemble an emergency supply kit, with at least three days worth of food and water for each person in your home.
- ▶ Learn first aid and CPR, so you can assist if requested to do so by authorities.
- ▶ Learn about the nature of terrorism, and how terrorists operate.
 - Report suspicious activities to the San Diego FBI office (858) 565-1255.
- ▶ Be alert and observe your environment.
 - Learn to locate exits for quick evacuation.
 - Avoid handling or opening suspicious mail. Visit www.usps.gov for help with identifying suspicious mail.
 - When traveling, keep track of your luggage and do not accept packages from strangers.

3. PRACTICE


- ▶ Practice evacuation drills regularly. Treat drills like games for children, so they are less likely to panic in a real emergency.
- ▶ Review and update your communication plan regularly, to ensure people know where it is and that numbers are accurate.
- ▶ Keep your CPR skills updated and your license current.

Frequently Asked Questions About Bioterrorism



Q: How real is the threat of bioterrorism?

A: The threat from bioterrorism is very limited, but we want to be prepared for any event.
Americans are more likely to be injured in a car accident than experience an act of terrorism.




Q: How can I help my children?

A: Reassure them that they are as safe as possible.
Ask questions about how they feel and listen to their thoughts.



Q: Is there treatment if someone is infected with a bioterrorism agent?

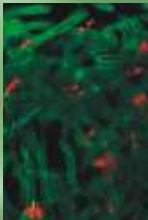
A: There is treatment available for most known bioterrorism agents. Many can be effectively treated with antibiotics.



Q: Should I stock up on antibiotics?

A: NO. Antibiotics will be available if there is a need for them, and taking antibiotics without the instruction of a physician can be dangerous.

1. Self-treatment with the wrong antibiotic could make a person sick and cause serious side-effects.
2. Antibiotics will lose effectiveness when stored for too long.



Q: Can I get vaccinated for anthrax?

A: Vaccination for anthrax is not recommended.
At this time, only the military has access to this vaccine.




Q: Can I get vaccinated for smallpox?

A: This vaccine is not currently available to the public.
While there is an effective vaccine available, at this time, only public health and hospital response teams are being vaccinated.



Q: If I was already vaccinated for smallpox, am I still protected?

A: Probably not. Immunity (protection) is only fully effective for up to five (5) years after receiving the vaccination, then it begins to lose strength. By 20 years after vaccination, an individual has no remaining protection from smallpox.



Q: What should I do in a situation where I believe I may be exposed to a bioterrorism agent?

A: Try to cover your nose, mouth and any cuts on your skin. Improvise with whatever you have on hand. Any dense-weave cotton material, like a folded t-shirt or towel, can help filter out contaminants in an emergency. Wash thoroughly with soap and water, as soon as possible.